THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • THURSDAY • SEPTEMBER 19, 2024 • ₹9.00 • PAGES 22 • LATE CITY EDITION

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AFTER PAGERS, NOW WALKIE-TALKIES EXPLODE KILLING 14 IN LEBANON

Walkie-talkies exploded in Beirut and other parts of the country, killing at least 14 people in the second wave of device explosions on Wednesday

SOLAR POWER SYSTEMS BLAST AT HOMES

Besides walkie-talkies, fingerprint readers and several solar power systems installed in homes across the country also exploded. A girl was injured when a solar power system exploded at a home in Beirut. In the south of the city, several blasts were heard at the funeral for three Hezbollah members and a child killed by exploding pagers the day before

WAR MOVING NORTH, SAYS ISRAELI MINISTER

- The new wave of device explosions has raised fears of an all-out war between Lebanon and Israel. Israel's defence minister Yoav Gallant hinted that a greater confrontation with Hezbollah could be ahead
- "The war's centre of gravity is moving north. We are at the start of a new phase. It requires courage, determination...," Gallant said | P14

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INJURED IN THE LATEST WAVE OF DEVICE EXPLOSIONS IN LEBANON

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

CABINET STAMP ON 'ONE POLL' SCHEME

Implementation group to be formed to take it forward

MUKESH RANJAN @ New Delhi

A day after Union home minister Amit Shah reiterated the Centre's commitment to introducing the one nation, one poll scheme, the Union Cabinet on Wednesday accepted the recommendations of a high-level panel led by former President Ram Nath Kovind on the matter.

The proposal aims to bundle elections for the Lok Sabha and state assemblies together, followed by urban body and panchayat polls within the subsequent 100 days. They will be discussed across India on various platforms and an implementation group will be formed to take the proposals forward.

A bill on the one nation, one election scheme is likely to be introduced in the upcoming winter session of Parliament. Since 18 constitutional amendments have to be made to synchronise polls, the NDA will need extra support to get is passed in Parliament. At present, the NDA has 293 in the 543-member Lok Sabha, and 119 in the 245-member Rajya Sabha.

A constitutional amendment can be passed only if the proposal has simple majority in the Lok Sabha as also two-thirds of the members present and voting in the House. If all 543 Lok Sabha members are present on the day of voting, the bill will require the support of 362. The Opposition INDIA bloc has 234 in the Lok Sabha.

In the Rajya Sabha, the NDA has 113 MPs and the assumed support of six nominated members, while the INDIA bloc has 85. If all members of the Rajya Sabha are present on the voting day, two-thirds would be 164.

The process of synchronising elections would begin with the President notifying the date of the first sitting of the Lok Sabha after a general election as the "appointed date", the panel suggested. The tenure of all state assemblies formed via polls after the "appointed date" and before the expiry of the full term of the Lok Sabha, will be only for the period ending up to the subsequent parliamentary polls. After this one-time transitory measure, all Lok Sabha and assembly polls will be held simultaneously.

If fresh polls are necessitated to constitute a new Lok Sabha in the event of a hung House or a no-confidence motion, or any such event, its will be only for the unexpired (remaining) term of the immediately preceding full term of the House.

If elections are held for state assemblies, then such new assemblies — unless sooner dissolved — shall continue only up to the end of the full term of Lok Sabha, the Kovind panel recommended.

President Droupadi Murmu receives a report on one nation, one poll from her predecessor Ram Nath Kovind | PTI

18 CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

To hold simultaneous elections, as many as 18 amendments to the Constitution and other statutes would be required. They include amending provisions on the preparation of the electoral roll (Article 325)

I compliment our former President, Shri Ram Nath Kovind Ji for spearheading this effort and consulting a wide range of stakeholders

Narendra Modi

It will not work. When polls come, and they do not have issues to raise, then they divert attention from real issues

Mallikarjun Kharge

A man shows his inked finger after voting in the first phase of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly elections in Anantnag district on Wednesday | ZAHOOR PUNJABI

Record 59% turnout in J&K Phase 1 polls

FAYAZ WANI @ Srinagar

VOTERS made a beeline outside polling stations in seven districts of Jammu and Kashmir that voted in the first phase of Assembly elections, the first in 10 years, on Wednesday. Close to 59% of the electorate cast its vote by evening, which is decidedly the highest among the past seven elections.

"I stood in a long queue and voted patiently to cast my vote. It was my first vote since the 1987 polls," said 72-year-old Ghulam Nabi Mir at a polling station in Tral in south Kashmir's Pulwama district.

There were long queues at all polling stations in the Tral Payeen area, a remarkable development given that Tral was known as "Kashmir's Kandhar" during the era of militancy as it was a known stronghold of militants and separatists.

"People have realised the importance of electoral politics. After the abrogation of Article 370, which disempowered us, we want to safeguard whatever is left there through our vote," Mir said.

Zubair Ahmed, a first-time voter, said he hopes the elected government will create jobs and usher in an era of development in J&K, especially in the Valley.

Brisk polling was reported in Pulwama, Shopian, Kulgam and Anantnag districts of south Kashmir, which voted in the phase. The first phase of polls covered 24 seats across seven districts.

An election official in a polling station in Tral said it is the first time that such a large number of people are voting. "In the past, only a handful of people used to cast their votes," she claimed.

India goes past China in the MSCI Index

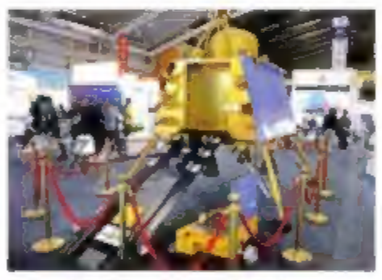
EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

ON the back of a growing economy and improving corporate earnings, India for the first time overtook China in the MSCI equities index. India's weight in the MSCI investible large, mid and small cap index rose to 2.35%, higher than China's weight of 2.24%, said global financial firm Morgan Stanley in its latest note.

The MSCI Index — Morgan Stanley Capital International Index — serves as a benchmark, showcasing the performance of mainly mid cap and large cap companies.

"India will continue to gain share due to market outperformance, new issuances and liquidity improvements," said Morgan Stanley's analysts. India's nominal GDP growth rate is more than thrice the economic growth in China.

Chandrayaan-4 mission model unveiled



The model of Chandrayaan-4 mission on display for the first time | EXPRESS

RISHITA KHANNA @ Bengaluru

THE model of Chandrayaan 4 mission, aiming to return Moon rocks and soil (regolith) to Earth, was displayed for the first time to the public at the Bengaluru Science Expo on Wednesday. Alongside the Chandrayaan 4 model, ISRO also displayed the Next Generation Launch Vehicle (NGLV) and the Human-Rated Launch Vehicle MK3 (HRLV).

An ISRO official told *TNIE* that the Chandrayaan 4 mission -- designed to land on the lunar surface, collect samples and return them to Earth -- features five key modules, divided into two stacks. "Stack 1 consists of the Ascender Module and Descender Module, both responsible for collecting lunar samples. Stack 2 includes the Propulsion Module for thrust, the Transfer Module to receive and hold the samples, and the re-entry module to bring them back to Earth," the official explained. P7

SAFE

PAVEMENTS BOOST PUBLIC TRANSPORT USE

Well-designed footpaths are the essential precursor to encourage people to leave their private vehicles behind. But that's not what is happening in Bengaluru. Most parts of the city have no footpaths or poorly-laid ones. Many people park vehicles on the road as private parking lot operators charge by the hour | P4

THREE STABBED AT GANESHA PROCESSION IN BELAGAVI

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Belagavi

THREE persons were stabbed by a trio during a Ganesha idol immersion procession in Belagavi on Tuesday night.

Belagavi Police Commissioner Iada Martin said three persons have been arrested over the incident. The police commissioner said he has information that the stabbing was over personal enmity.

A large number of people were taking part in the procession in which hundreds of idols installed at various public places in the city were being immersed. The three who were stabbed stay in a hostel in Belagavi.

They were stabbed in the neck, stomach and back, sources said. One of them, Pravin Gundyagol, has sustained serious injuries. Two others -- Darshan Patil and Satish -- have been admitted to a private hospital.

Three attackers who were trying to flee on the bike after stabbing the trio were chased and caught by APMC policemen. More persons are said to be involved in the incident and the police are searching for them.

EAR TO THE GROUND

Not much wriggle room on external debt

DILRUKSHI HANDUNNETTI

Award-winning journalist and lawyer, founder and director of the Colombo-based Center for Investigative Reporting (CIR)

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's two presidential frontrunners have pledged to renegotiate the agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), increase social security and ease people's financial burdens, but experts say major deviations may not be feasible though it is possible to chip away at the edges. The fact of the matter is, irrespective of who becomes the president on September 21, he has an insurmountable task to revamp the economy and to keep things afloat.

A new government will have to ensure that we meet revenue targets already agreed to. This is not negotiable. It is fundamental to the country's survival to have a stable tax revenue flow," said Umesh Moramudali, a lecturer in economics with the University of Colombo.

Sri Lanka has performed well with revenue targets so far. There is little scope for making changes there. Irrespective of who comes to power, the IMF will have to adopt a pragmatic approach and work with the new administration. Negotiating with external creditors is a time-consuming complex process. And neither the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) nor the National Peoples' Power (NPP) will run such a political risk at this moment, Moramudali noted.

The immediate priorities of the next government, according to Imran Furkan, a geopolitical economic risk analyst, will be to reach agreements with bond holders to overcome the island's default status, deal with corruption towards accountable governance and to create conditions to increase consumption to pre-crisis levels to stabilise the economy and increase revenue.

Furkan said that either party will try to introduce economic relief (which will require legislation). "The SJB will focus on expanding social welfare while the NPP will try to offer relief while tackling corruption," Furkan told this newspaper. He added that the NPP has already been engaging with the IMF, realising that it will become necessary to reach an understanding in case of a victory. "Tackling corruption is key if Sri Lanka is to promote foreign direct investment," he said.

There is agreement that there are lessons to be learnt from the economic mismanagement of the Gotabaya Rajapaksa administration which brought the country to a standstill in 2022.

CONTINUED ON: P11

89th BIRTHDAY

Thiru. N.P.V. RAMASAMY UDAYAR

Founder - Chancellor,
Sri Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education and Research (DU)

You have proved that education alone
will not yield one's future.
Creativity, entrepreneurship, hard work and
relentless effort are all
necessary to become a leader.
The greatest wealth you have
left to this country is a
medical citadel (SRIHER) which has
paved the way for excellent
health care professionals.
On this day, we bow our head and
salute you for your formidable thought
and epoch making endeavour.

V.R. Venkataachalam

Chancellor, Sri Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education and Research (DU)

Family Members
Trustees, Sri Ramachandra Educational and Health Trust
Faculty, Staff & Students

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